

MOROCCO CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Moroccans generally shake hands when greeting, after which one might touch the heart to express pleasure at seeing the other person or to show personal warmth.

Rural children conventionally kiss the right hand or forehead of their parents or elders to show respect when greeting.

Assalam Oualaikoum (Peace be upon you) is commonly used as “Hello.” People also use *Sbah al Kheir* (Good morning) and *Msa al Kheir* (Good evening). More formally, one might say *Ahlan Wasahlan* (Pleased to see you). Friends may exchange the phrase *Labess*, which means both “How are you?” and “Fine.” Greetings between friends also include inquiries about each other's well-being and that of their families. Hosts often extend repeated enthusiastic phrases of welcome. Less fervent greetings might be considered rude.

It is polite to greet an acquaintance when passing on an urban street, but people do not greet strangers.

Elders might be referred to by a title such as *hadj* (an honorable title for those who have completed a pilgrimage to Makkah) or the equivalent of “aunt” or “uncle.”

Gestures:

Moroccans eat with the right hand only.

It is impolite to point at people or to let the bottom of the foot point toward a person. Moroccans generally consider it improper to cross their legs. Some might cross the legs at the knees but would not place an ankle over a knee.

Holidays:

Each year, Muslims observe *Ramadan*, a month of fasting and prayer, when no eating, drinking, or smoking is permitted from dawn to sunset.

Religious holidays include *Aid al Saghir* (the three-day feast at the end of *Ramadan*), *Aid al Kebir* (the feast at the end of the pilgrimage to Makkah), and *Mouloud* (celebrating the birth of Muhammad).

Because Muslims use a lunar calendar (28-day months), the dates of these holidays constantly change in relation to the Gregorian calendar. In addition, numerous *Moussems* (religious festivals) are held throughout the year. Morocco's official public holidays include International New Year (1 Jan.), Throne Day (30 July), Youth Day (21 Aug.), Green March Day (6 Nov.), and Independence Day (18 Nov.).